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RECENT ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES IN CHINA.

By Professor F. W. Williams, Yale University.

The humiliation of punishment received at the hands of foreigners in the year of débacle, 1900, aroused the Chinese Government to issue an edict in 1901 calling for the opinions of the higher officials upon the subject of administrative changes desirable in the crisis. The replies received resulted in two measures adopted in that year, the substitution of a Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the *Wai-wu Pu*, in place of the old and discredited *Tsung-li Yamên*, and the creation of a Bureau of Political Affairs for the purpose of considering all propositions for political reforms. Capable men were also sent to Japan to study and report upon all that had been achieved there in the alteration of her ancient institutions. Reforms looking toward a new scheme of national education at this time were happily facilitated by the closing of the triennial examination at Peking and in the three northern provinces as a punitive measure in the treaties exacted by foreigners. Left for a time without their accustomed machinery for passing scholars into the group of eligibles for office, the Chinese authorities could afford, without meeting the opposition of the old scholarly class, to arrange for the introduction into the curriculum of future candidates for civil-service examinations the scientific studies from the Occident. A great crop of schools sprang up all over the Empire and in a few years the Government found itself strong enough to abolish forever the ancient system of classical examinations for office. This advance in opinion was followed in 1905 by the creation of a commission to study the governments of the chief powers of the Western world. Its report brought about the promise of a constitution for China in August, 1906.

This year marks an epoch in the history of China. In it the old machinery, taken over wholesale from the Mings at the time of the Manchu conquest, was reorganized and the ancient Six Boards of Government with Chinese and Manchu Presidents in duplicate were remodeled, without, however, reducing the new boards to a really logical series or creating a cabinet through which they might report as a unit to the Emperor. As reconstructed, they comprise eighteen departments, of which eleven constitute proper Ministries. They are those of Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs, Civil Appointments, Finance, Rites, Justice, Agriculture-Works-Commerce, Colonies, Army, Education and Communications, to which a Ministry of the Navy has recently been added. Though these changes were important and promising, it need not be thought that they effectually altered the course of Chinese thought, the conflict of parties or the influence of corruption in controlling the politics of the Empire; yet something, undoubtedly, was begun which will go on.

By the beginning of the year 1908, the two most prominent Viceroys, Chang Chi-tung and Yuan Shi-kai, had been relieved of their governments and associated with Prince Chun, the Emperor's brother and now Regent of the Empire, as Grand Councillors to the Throne. Their labors resulted in the publication of a general scheme for successive reforms, to be undertaken during nine years, and the outlines of a constitution, together with certain election laws and a National Diet, to be established in 1917. Unfortunately, within three months from the date of this epoch-making announcement the Emperor and Empress-Dowager were both dead, and ere the close of another year Yuan had been dismissed from the service of the Throne, Chang was dead, and Tuan Fang, the leading progressive Manchu Viceroy, had been cashiered. The Regent, however, considers himself personally committed to the furtherance of the reform measures with which he has been so closely identified, and the promise of a serious prosecution of the work is sufficiently bright to warrant an examination of the program thus far arranged.

The plan as published resembles in general a similar pro-

nunciamento with the promise of a constitution issued in Japan in 1889. First comes a consideration of the place of the Sovereign: He is declared to be sacred and inviolable, vested with all the rights of State and control, and creating of his own will certain bodies to assist him in his rule. These clauses are copied from the Japanese constitution. Subjects of the Emperor are obliged to observe the law, pay taxes and serve in the army when required, but they may hold office, stand for election, enjoy liberty of speech and freedom from arrest, except under process of law, and keep their property inviolable unless fairly condemned to lose it. The National Diet, when assembled, shall have two houses. Its constitution is not yet fully determined, but while the Throne seems to reserve in all cases the right of absolute veto over its acts, the annual budget will require its consent and it will be allowed to discuss every measure affecting the whole Empire as well as impeach high officials, though it may not interfere with the imperial prerogative of appointment and dismissal.

Before this body is convened and the franchise regulated, successive changes are arranged for the intervening years through 1916. These contemplate a general census by 1914, a gradual extension of the present educational system, especially increasing the number of primary schools, the publication of necessary text-books, the establishment of an Imperial University and of a Peers' School at Peking. More important than these are the laws covering changes in local government, a national police or gendarmerie and the relegation of all criminal and legal matters—at present a provincial concern—to a national Department of Justice, together with the preparation of a code and new laws of procedure and of commerce. Upon the success of this fundamental reconstruction of the Satrap system of territorial government the future of China must depend. As to finance, an edict contemplating an entire reorganization has already been published. National accounts and a system of Imperial taxation are provided for, and a Board of Audit or Finance is to be placed in control. The gold standard is to be introduced by successive steps, the old distinction between Man-

chu and Chinese abolished, two million Manchu Bannermen and their families incorporated in the general population, and a national army and navy created to replace the provincial levies—a necessary change, for the Manchus in China Proper have long been a burden upon the Empire and the provincial armies practically useless as a support to the Throne.

Finally, the program provides for Provincial Assemblies, the first sessions of which were held last fall, and a Provisional Parliament to be assembled in the capital next October and meet annually until replaced by the Diet of the Empire in 1917. The provinces are divided into districts called *chen* and *hsiang*, in each of which local bodies shall be elected for two years to discuss matters of agriculture, trade, education, public health, the poor and the like, their acts being carried out by a small executive committee in every commune. They replace the ancient semi-moral and punitive powers of the Village headsmen, whose functions are for the most part transferred to higher officials and determined by courts of law. Above them come the *Tsz-ichu*, or Provincial Parliaments, containing from thirty to one hundred and forty members according to the size and importance of the province, twenty-two in number, meeting annually, a third of the members going out each year. The franchise is restricted to males over twenty-five years old who have been officials or possess a literary degree or secondary education, or who own property worth more than \$5,000. The Parliament has but one chamber and considers financial and legal matters pertaining to the province, petitions and propositions from citizens, disputes between self-governing bodies and inquiries from the Governor. It also takes up illegal acts of officials and in case the Governor refuses to carry out its resolutions the case is referred to the Provisional Parliament. Various opinions have been reported as to the value in practice of the initial sessions of these Provincial assemblies. European observers seem to be doubtful of their promise, but the Japanese, mindful of some unpleasant features which marked the beginning of representative government in their own country, appear to take a favorable

view. It is a good sign that the elections passed off without disturbance or corruption, and that in some of them matters of importance were debated with considerable ability and signs of careful preparation.

The Provisional Parliament, called *Tsz-cheng Yuan*, designed to prepare the way for the Diet, will consist of two hundred members in one chamber, half of them chosen by the Provincial Governors from 200 members of the Provincial Parliaments nominated by these bodies, the other half appointed by the Emperor from the Imperial Clan, hereditary nobles, tributary chiefs, Government officials of certain ranks, men of wealth and learned scholars. This temporary body will be of some importance in training men from all over the country in methods of parliamentary government. It will discuss only matters of Imperial importance and submit to the Throne disputes between provinces and between the Governors and their legislatures. All questions involving the laws of the Empire or the Imperial Clan are excepted from discussion, but if this Parliament and any high officer should disagree in matters of privilege or because of violations of the law, it may by a two-thirds vote submit the dispute with an expression of its opinion to the Throne. It will be noted that the framers of all this political machinery reserve the real authority in the hands of the sovereign as in past ages. Without any supreme judiciary, a responsible ministry, or cohesion between different departments of Government or provincial administrations, the whole political life of China is made to depend upon the will of one individual. Obviously the Manchu Monarch does not propose voluntarily to establish in power his own judge and executioner. Yet we need not condemn him without consideration of the situation in which the Empire is now placed. It needs, during the present generation, a strong and wise ruler rather than full political liberty and representative institutions. It has watched Japan prosper under the difficult process of transition to Western methods of rule, while, with far greater resources, China has in the same period narrowly escaped political extinction. The chief reason for this difference has been because Japan was well

centralized and able to insure her defence by military reforms, while China, owing to a deplorable lack of centralization, has been robbed and invaded by foreigners and harried by rebellious subjects. Her great need now is not liberty so much as control under one hand, the reduction of the military and fiscal independence of the provinces, and the subordination of local plans and prejudice to Imperial purposes. Until education has done its work and she is mentally and morally in readiness, China has no need of a greatly restricted monarchy or of assemblies that actually represent the great and ignorant majority of her people.